



**International Development Research Centre
Centre de recherches pour le développement international**

**For Richer, For Poorer?
North - South Relations after the G-8 Summit**

by

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The main story in our newspapers on Monday morning was not renewed commitment by the G-8 to decrease the widening gap between rich and poor. The story was about combatting drugs and international crime, about creating the means to impose order on this particular outcome of globalisation. These newspaper reports were not inaccurate; international crime was an important subject of discussion. However, the agenda went further: achieving economic growth while safeguarding the environment and promoting good governance; healthy G-8 economies which produce jobs, were the items sharing space on the agenda with transnational crime. Just as leaders headed to Birmingham, riots in Jakarta and nuclear tests in India gave new definition to the term Asian Crisis and urgency to the meeting.

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is not doing work on international crime (maybe we should), but we are supporting research by developing country researchers on virtually all the other topics covered by the G-8. IDRC is a part of the Canadian foreign policy family, very much a legacy of our former Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson.

Le rapport Pearson « *Vers une action commune pour le développement du tiers-monde* » a été le premier d'une importante trilogie qui a posé les jalons de la coopération en matière de développement -- Pearson, Brandt et Brundtland. Le rapport Pearson a mis en évidence que ni l'indépendance politique, ni l'aide extérieure, ni l'industrialisation n'offraient des réponses satisfaisantes aux problèmes du sous-développement. De nouvelles approches, y compris le soutien financier à la recherche autochtone, s'avéraient opportunes. Le CRDI a été créé uniquement dans ce but.

Le rapport Pearson a rendu populaire l'idée, devenue aujourd'hui banale, de l'interdépendance des pays riches et des pays pauvres dans le monde. Comme c'est souvent le cas dans la vie de tous les jours, les choses paraissent banales lorsqu'elles sont tout simplement vraies. Mais se rendre à l'évidence n'est pas encore passer à l'action.

IDRC was given life by Parliament on May 13, 1970. Consistent with the times, it was, as one of the founding Governors, Rex Nettleford of Jamaica, said, "A revolutionary, if strange institution".

IDRC was revolutionary in that it turned development back to people in developing countries, albeit very particular people: the then small band of trained scientists dedicated to finding solutions to problems which plagued poor countries as they emerged from colonialism. Why strange? Well it was certainly strange, thirty years ago, for a public corporation to be created

with a governing Board that was almost half non-Canadian, a governing Board that would be making decisions about the expenditure of Canadian taxpayers hard-earned dollars. The Act has stood the test of time remarkably well. Its objectives remain valid.

IDRC has been an expression of international solidarity around the application of science and technology and other knowledge to the eradication of persistent inequality. We work at the juncture of two worlds, research and development, both of which are easily misunderstood. However, as a Canadian institution we are a manifestation of the enduring support of Canadians for a positive role in the world. Recent national opinion polls confirm this, such as one done last month for the Canadian National Committee of the International Institute for Strategic Studies by the Toronto-based polling company COMPAS. The main finding was “the powerful streak of democratic moralism that pervades almost all of Canadians’ thinking about international affairs...”.

À Birmingham, les premiers ministres et chefs d'État présents ont fait remarquer qu'un des défis les plus difficiles auxquels le monde est confronté est celui « de permettre aux pays les plus pauvres de la planète, notamment en Afrique, de développer leurs capacités, de mieux s'intégrer à l'économie mondiale et donc de bénéficier des perspectives qu'ouvre la mondialisation. » Ils ont réitéré en particulier leur engagement envers l'éducation primaire, la réduction de la mortalité maternelle et infantile et la diminution de la fraction de la population mondiale plongée dans une pauvreté extrême. Leaders stressed the importance of implementing the vision set out at previous summits and pledged themselves “to a shared international effort”:

1. Support democracy and fight corruption;
2. Recognize the importance of development assistance, including IDA replenishment, ESAF and the African Development Fund. (The last budget here suggests that the disastrous decline in ODA spending is slowing down);
3. Better aid focus in support of reform, including development of social infrastructure and measures to improve trade and investment;
4. Work within OECD to prepare a recommendation for next year on untying aid to LDC's. (This could have implications for Canada);
5. Debt reduction (continue with the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative);
6. Forgive aid-related bilateral debt;
7. Enhance mutual co-operation on infectious and parasitic diseases, including the “Roll Back Malaria” initiative (Nigel Motts, ROSA under SMEEIT initiative);

8. Continue aids vaccine work;
9. Strengthening Africa's ability to prevent and ease conflict;
10. Linking debt relief to peacebuilding.

I will leave you with three examples of IDRC-funded research that address some of challenges which preoccupied the G-8 leaders.

Social Effects of Market Liberalization

First, the social impact of market liberalization in Vietnam.

In recent years, economic liberalization and restructuring in Viet Nam has meant the abrupt withdrawal of government from many aspects of urban development, while pressure from urban migration and economic growth has increased. The social safety net, with its guarantees of housing, jobs, and health care, has virtually disappeared.

Given its previous isolation from the West, Viet Nam had no experience dealing with the "side effects" of a market economy. Moreover, the government had little empirical data on which to base new policies dealing with urban problems. IDRC funded a research project, which was a joint initiative of_ l'Institut d'Urbanisme at l'Université de Montréal and four Vietnamese institutions led by the Hanoi Architecture University. In 1993, Vietnamese project researchers began to collect socio-economic data that could meet this need.

Les chercheurs ont eu des résultats inattendus. Près de 20 % des foyers défavorisés étaient dirigés par une femme seule, soit à peu près le même pourcentage que dans les pays industrialisés. Les chercheurs ont aussi été surpris du nombre de citoyens illégaux - jusqu'à 70 % dans certains quartiers de Hô Chi Minh-Ville.

La somme de travail qui a émané du projet a conduit à une série de recommandations, dont plusieurs ont été incorporées à la nouvelle politique en matière de logement. La législation visant la mise en application de la politique fait actuellement l'objet d'une révision._

Malaria

Malaria is one of the planet's deadliest diseases. The G-8 called special attention to the challenge of its eradication. In Africa alone, malaria is responsible for as many as half the deaths of

children under the age of five. Insecticide-treated bednets (ITNs) are becoming important tools in the battle to reduce malaria. A recent market study done in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda by PATH Canada suggests a need for greater promotion of the nets by the private sector, a strategy that so far has been overlooked by malaria control programs. The study was part of an IDRC-supported project on malaria intervention for child survival.

Mosquito nets and netting material are subject to high tariffs and taxes - more than 20% in most African countries. Rationalization of trade barriers is needed to encourage businesses to produce, import, market, and distribute ITNs. For example, in Tanzania, a tax on ready-made netting was lifted in 1993. The move increased availability dramatically and improved the quality of the nets.

Water and Peace

As the peace process in the Middle East stagnates, Israelis and Palestinians are making quiet progress on one of the most contentious issues in the region - the management of water supplies._

Israel and the West Bank share several aquifers that are important sources of ground water supply. As part of a three-year project supported by IDRC, three workshops have been held on the joint management on these aquifers._

A complex of aquifers underlies the mountainous range that separates the Jordan River basin from the Mediterranean. Collectively called the Mountain Aquifer, the bulk of the water flows naturally from east to west. It is recharged on the Palestinian side of the Green Line (the pre-1967 border) but most of the storage capacity is found on the Israeli side, along with the largest springs. Israeli farmers have tapped the aquifer water supplies since the 1930s while Palestinians have drawn from springs for centuries. The aquifer currently faces a growing threat of contamination due to excessive use and waste disposal._

Given the scarcity of water in the region, it is critical to protect such an important resource. This is the aim of the joint management of shared aquifers project. The project on shared aquifers is jointly managed by The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Palestine Consultancy Group of East Jerusalem.

Global Survey on Environment

In all countries it is a challenge to integrate new knowledge into policy development, to ensure that new knowledge is well-communicated to citizens so that they can absorb it and advocate

policy change. On broad environmental questions it seems that researchers and citizens may be closer to each other than to their political leaders. IDRC participated in the financing of a massive global survey which has shown that governments around the world, including in developing countries like Nigeria and China, are out of step with their citizens' views on the environment.

Le premier sondage international de suivi environnemental révèle que les populations sont plus préoccupées par l'environnement qu'il y a six ans, au moment où le Sommet de la Terre, à Rio de Janeiro, a placé les questions environnementales au centre des programmes gouvernementaux. Au cours de ces six années, les engagements pris par les gouvernements à l'égard de la protection de l'environnement ont cédé leur place aux questions économiques._

Another important finding was the level of anxiety over children's health. More than eight in ten people in 19 of the 20 countries studied believe that environmental problems will affect their children's health. "People are fearing for the health of their children and grandchildren," says the survey's coordinator, Doug Miller. "It's a very potent, latent political force." He predicts that the strength of these and other environmental concerns are going to result in another "green wave of progress" in many countries within the next five years. Indeed, Tony Blair has been talking recently about the importance of the environment for children. Could that be New Labour talking about New Environment?

In reflecting on the G-8 agenda, it becomes clear very quickly that there is no neat and tidy developed-developing country split on the major issues confronting the world. We are living interdependence and the policymakers are working hard to catch up and manage it.

The title of this talk "*For Richer, for Poorer*" captures an analysis of how the world is becoming economically richer but environmentally poorer. It reflects the Summit agenda, and IDRC programs. As I wrote, that phrase brought back echoes of marriage vows. Now, global interdependence is not the same as the interdependence of a couple. I do note that in my old prayer book, in addition to promising to stick by her husband "for richer for poorer", the bride also had to promise to obey. That was not equitable interdependence. Today brides can discard that promise. They can opt for equity. We need equitable global interdependence, too. IDRC works hard towards that goal.